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"28. The psychological impact of air attacks which have caused civilian casualties and damage in RVN." (S)

STAG Comment: (TS) South Vietnamese reaction to strikes in NVN has been good. Senior GVN officials, the military, influential elements of both the Catholic and Buddhist clergy and the urban populace have supported the strikes. Morale, as a result of strikes in NVN, has improved among provincial, district and even village officials in some provinces. We have been unable to locate any study in this area. There are, however, some significant indicators. A Rand study¹ confirmed early impressions that GVN air and artillery attacks on villages do not ordinarily have a major adverse effect on the villagers' behavior, even though they may lead to criticism of the government or Americans. No VC individual interviewed in the sample said that he joined the VC because of these attacks. In some instances VC deserters stated that the villagers blamed the VC for bombings and artillery fire because of their presence. In many instances VC were not welcome in the villages because the village had previously been struck by bombs. Many villagers seem to be resigned to attacks because they appear to be unavoidable in war. Sometimes they have expressed the wish that the government would secure the area quickly so that attacks would no longer be necessary. In the I corps area there was a considerable increase in refugees as a result of US Marine operations around Da Nang. Villagers left in fear of air attacks and many were bitter about the handling they received in the camps from the GVN. If US and GVN policy on refugee control had been more realistic at that time, there would not have been the deplorable conditions within the camps or the bitter feelings, on the part of the refugees, of having been abandoned by the GVN, that have been reported by the free world press. There are numerous instances where the population in areas under VC control fled to government controlled territory

¹ Rand Memorandum RM 4699-ISA/ARPA, August 1965.

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to escape expected or actual air attack. There is little doubt that the refugee problem has been aggravated by the air strike program. The villagers do not blame the government for the attacks but do condemn its callous attitude toward the plight of the villager after he has been driven from his village by the air attacks. In an incident which occurred on 13 November 1965 three high performance aircraft (presumably US) attacked the Ben Hoi bridge in the DMZ. There were no deaths or damage on the north side of the bridge in NVN. On the south side in GVN territory a large office building used by GVN police was damaged substantially and a Confucianist meeting hall suffered damage. One GVN policeman was injured seriously and three others slightly. Villagers on the GVN side appeared very upset and one family that lived in a damaged house had fled to another village. Others said they would like to leave also. This situation indicates that when villagers expect to feel free from danger of air strikes and are subjected to them, their reaction is more violent than when they expect them. This incident also indicates the fallibility of pilots in target identification.

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